

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-01-2014 @ 0900

“What Endurance Marks Your Witness?”

II Timothy 3:1-12

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THAT NAME

Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! There's just something about that Name!

Master! Savior! Jesus! Like the fragrance after the rain!

Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Let all Heaven and earth proclaim:

“Kings and Kingdoms shall all pass away, but there's something about that Name!”

II Timothy 3:1-12

“You must understand this: In the Last Days, there will be violent periods of time. People will be selfish, and love money...They will appear to have a godly life, but they will not let its Power change them...But you know all about my teachings, my way of life, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance...I endured...persecutions, and the Lord rescued me from all of them. Those who try to live a godly life because they believe in Christ Jesus will be persecuted!”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you noticed the elements of violence that mark our culture? Whether watching the evening news, sporting events, or even some of our cartoons, do you mark the “carnage”?
- Do you know people who can “talk the talk” of religion, but seem quite content to “walk the walk” of the world around us? What “knowledge of God” do they manifest?
- Conversely, have others impressed you by their quiet integrity and patient endurance, even in the face of grievous opposition and vicious misrepresentation?

Good witness is not for wimps! It is a 24/7/365 enterprise! We are living in a culture that calls the whole religious endeavor into question. If the notion of God is discussed at all, there are small but vocal groups of “disbelievers” who dismiss the Divine Reality as “antiquated superstition” and “useless nonsense”. “Religious organizations”, (be they “Churches”, “Temples”, “Houses of Prayer”, or any such spiritually oriented fellowships,) face mounting pressure to “cease and desist” in any effort to witness actively. Failing that, they are scrutinized for any inconsistencies or shortcomings that will allow their opposition to dismiss them as hypocritical and irrelevant. We who claim to love the One who has first loved us must face this culture with Paul’s “weaponry”: clear teachings, an authentic way of life, proper purpose, fervent faith, serene patience, lasting love, and relentless endurance. In teaching clearly the Truth God has revealed, we must remain faithful to what we have received from our forbearers in faith. Our way of life needs to resonate with that teaching, so that the people who observe us see our “walk” corresponds in every way to our “talk”. God’s Glory is our proper purpose, and requires constant attention to the deepening of our faith in Him. Constant prayer and willing sacrifice of time, talent, and effort to make Him known and loved will test our patience and serenity, but that is the way of Christ-like love. We must remain ready to “endure the unendurable” in His Name, because we are engaged in a struggle of cosmic proportions. God, grant us the vision and will to follow where Your Son has led. He willingly witnessed to the immensity of Your Love for us all, right to the Cross, to the Tomb, and beyond! He promised to remain with us “to the End of the Age”, and commissioned us to share His Good News in all we say and do. Send us a new outpouring of Your Spirit, so we embrace an “all-in” witness which glorifies You and reclaims our world for Love!

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-02-2014 @ 0900

“Do You Really Desire A Godly Life?”

II Timothy 3:12-15

THERE’S SOMETHING ABOUT THAT NAME

Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! There’s just something about that Name!

Master! Savior! Jesus! Like the fragrance after the rain!

Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Let all heaven and earth proclaim:

“Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but there’s something about that Name!”

II Timothy 3:12-15

“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted, and evil persons and impostors will keep on going from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived themselves. But as for you, continue in the Truths that you were taught and firmly believe. You know who your teachers were, and you remember that ever since you were a child, you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever wanted to “be someone” or do “something special” until you discovered how much work, practice, sweat and/or pain was involved? Did that make you quit?
- Have you ever wanted to quit a project or abandon a mission until some inspirational words or motivational example “fired you up”, giving you the needed “juice” to continue?
- Do you know “believers” who live the “Life of Children of God” with fidelity to the Truths they received in their youth, even when it would be easy to “go with the flow” of the world?

So you want to “live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus”? Are you ready or prepared for the *persecution* which will definitely come? You will be tempted to compromise your commitments, or even “cave in” to the pressure of secular culture and self-centered individualism that assaults you from every angle, curve, and corner, (sometimes from those you thought you could trust the most!) *Wanting* to live “a godly life” and actually “living in union with God” are two very different things. Many young men want to play football in the NFL, but not many will make it. Out of the 100,000 seniors in High School who play football, only 2.4% will make it to the college ranks, (about 9,000). Of these 9,000 college players, only about 215 dedicated athletes will actually “break into” the NFL; (that’s about 0.2%!) What separates those 215 from the other 99,785 “players”? It’s mostly a matter of attitude; the “pros” are willing to “pay the price” in time, effort, and raw *guts*! More than any of the other candidates, they are most willing to endure the persecution. All who “want” to make it will be persecuted; all will need to *choose* to endure pain, sweat, tears, and make sacrifices that may seem “insane” to the less motivated. Their coaches may have warned them all of the challenges ahead, but only 215 exercised the real commitment required for success. This kind of commitment is what Paul means when he warns: “But as for you, continue in the Truths that you were taught and firmly believe.” You know who your teachers, pastors, Sunday school teachers, or coaches were, and you remember all they have taught you, as well as what you learned from the Holy Scriptures. God, grant us Grace to continue in the Truths You revealed long ago, and passed to us through faithful witnesses. Kindle in us a burning desire to live a godly life in union with Your Son. Holy Spirit, enliven us with a true commitment to Christ Jesus, so we stand by Him in the face of persecution as faithfully as He “stood for us” as He endured the Cross to set us free!

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-03-2014 @ 0900

"It's All In the Scriptures!"

II Timothy 3:16-17

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THAT NAME

Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! There's just something about that Name!

Master! Savior! Jesus! Like the fragrance after the rain!

Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Let all heaven and earth proclaim:

"Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but there's something about that Name!"

II Timothy 3:16-17

"All Scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching the Truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for Right Living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified, and equipped to do every kind of good deed."

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever struggled for an answer to some difficult issue, thorny problem, or stormy relationship in life, and looked for answers or resolutions everywhere but in the Scriptures?
- Do you know those who provided "everything money could afford" for their children as far education, athletics, and even the arts, but neglected any training in the Holy Scriptures?
- Were you ever surprised to attend worship, and find the Scripture reading addressed the exact situation you were facing, with a Wisdom so simple and creative you were astounded?

Almost everything you buy today comes with an instruction book, often written in several different languages. You buy a new cell phone, and it will come with pages and pages of how to install this app, or how to do that function, as well as a "quick start-up guide". In our endeavor to become more Christ-like, we also have a "how-to guide", called the "Holy Bible" or the "Sacred Scriptures". Paul explains exactly why these Scriptures are so important and useful. When our "leaders" speak today, how many of us believe they present "the truth without spin"? Have "government institutions" recently begun to minimize the use (and even the presence) of Scripture because of its power to challenge and convict in the areas of truth, faith, ethics, and even common sense? Paul puts absolute truth simply when he claims, "All Scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching the Truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for Right Living". This is why teachers in our first schools used the Scriptures as a primer for teaching reading; these passages provided the basis for all conduct, and prepared an individual for life, learning lessons of love and honor, faith and freedom. As we drift further from the Scriptures, and the God who inspired them, ethical errors and moral faults often go uncorrected, even praised as "courageous integrity", or excused as "regrettable idiosyncrasy". Young people today still search for examples of "Right Living", but the secular culture around us makes such models of spiritual purity and moral rectitude harder to find. Yet God's Word endures, and any who search it in a spirit of faith will find God's revealed Guidance is there for the asking. With a good mentor to assist in authentic study, and the spiritual fellowship of committed believers, any devout disciple will find in the Scriptures all the counsel and comfort necessary to "walk with God". Lord of Truth, open to us who seek You the wondrous Wisdom of the Scriptures. As we learn their lessons, mold our souls in humility and wonder. Teach us to perceive their worth, and apply their truth to our daily lives. As we ponder their treasures, make us ever more perfect images of Your Love & Truth!